

## New England Businesses Turn On Green Power

by John Moskal,  
EPA Region 1 – New England

New England businesses and organizations now have an environmental choice when it comes to power. Businesses like Staples, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, and Shaw's Supermarkets in Rhode Island have made the decision to buy green power to cover a portion of their electricity consumption.

Thanks to recent changes in the region's electricity markets, businesses can now buy green power either directly from their local utility, when available, or indirectly through a renewable energy certificate provider. Local utilities are increasingly offering green pricing products or options, often in conjunction with third party partners. Renewable energy certificates, also called green tags or RECs, are sold independently from electricity service (i.e., you do not need to notify your electricity supplier to purchase certificates) and are purchased based on a fixed amount of power, rather than on your daily or monthly electricity load profile.

Regardless of the source of the transaction, green power options offer businesses an easy way to support electricity generation from "cleaner" energy sources, including solar, wind, biomass, and other renewable energy technologies. Organizations that buy green power are helping to support the development of new renewable energy power plants.

New England's higher education institutions are becoming an important force in the growing demand for green power products. Several colleges, including Yale University, Colby College, University of Maine, Connecticut College, and College of the Atlantic, have made the switch to green power. Students have often

spearheaded campaigns for their schools to purchase green power. For example, Connecticut College agreed in May 2001 to purchase over 2.5 million kilowatt-hours of green power during the 2001-2002 academic year in response to a student-led campaign.

Staples, with headquarters in Framingham, has been a leading purchaser of renewable energy for several years. Staples, which operates in dozens of utility territories around the country, purchases renewable energy certificates (RECs) for ten percent of its total annual U.S. electricity consumption. Staples reached this milestone through the purchase of 46 million kilowatt hours per year. Staples' RECs are sourced from renewable energy facilities that generate electricity from wind farms, biomass and landfill gas resources.

Another New England-based company, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, purchased RECs that helped finance construction of the first Native American-owned and operated utility-scale wind turbine, working with a Vermont-based green power provider who partners with the Rosebud Sioux tribe in South Dakota. Green Mountain Coffee's participation purchase offsets 2,302 tons of carbon dioxide – the annual emissions of 384 cars – and negates the climate change impact of a year of the Company's roasting operations.

In response to market opportunity, Massachusetts Electric recently launched its GreenUp program that allows customers in its service territory to purchase green power. Under the new program, an eligible Massachusetts Electric customer can select a renewable energy product from one of four firms – CET & Conservation Services Group, Inc., Community Energy, Inc., Mass. Energy Consumers Alliance and Sterling Planet.

Cheryl LaFleur, president and chief executive officer of Massachusetts Electric, said, "By sponsoring GreenUp, we are making it easier for our customers to make an investment in renewable energy sources. At the same time, we're also supporting the development of the renewable energy market in New England by providing renewable energy firms with access to potential customers."

In October 2003, NSTAR filed with the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Energy to offer a similar green power option to its customers, soon to be called NSTAR Green. Other utility providers in New England offering green power options to businesses and institutions include Vermont's Green Mountain Power (a product called CoolHome) and Maine Interfaith Power & Light.

Green power purchases, whether through a local utility or a REC purchase, offset the environmental impact of power generated from traditional electricity sources, such as the burning of gas and coal. "Traditional electricity consumption burns fossil fuels and is a leading cause of air pollution," said Kurt Johnson of the U.S. EPA.

The U.S. EPA has created a voluntary program, the Green Power Partnership, to assist and promote private or public sector organizations interested in using green power. The program helps participating organizations assess green power options, as well as promote their green power purchases. Organizations interested in becoming Green Power Partners simply pledge to procure an amount of renewable energy proportional to their annual electricity use.

In addition to the New England purchasers already mentioned, more than 220 organizations nationwide have joined EPA's Green Power Partnership. These organizations are

buying over 1 billion kWh of green power from green pricing programs (offered through utilities), renewable energy certificates, or on-site generation sources.

#### **Ready to Get Started?**

EPA has developed a Green Power Locator on its web site to help you

learn about what green power options are available in your state. Visit the Green Power Partnership web site at [www.epa.gov/greenpower](http://www.epa.gov/greenpower) and click on "Green Power Locator" on the left navigation bar. On the website you will also find information about green power, its benefits, other green power

leaders, and how to participate in the Green Power Partnership. ■

John Moskal is a Senior Energy Analyst for EPA Region 1. For more information, please contact him at (617) 918-1826 or via e-mail at [moskal.john@epa.gov](mailto:moskal.john@epa.gov).